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DE RUEHHM #0010/01 0040917
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1943
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 2104
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI 1421
RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0018
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0022
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0126
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0027
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0018
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 0034
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//USDP/ISA/AP//
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC//J2/J3/J5//
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-3//
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J00/J2/J3/J5//
RHEFAFM/DIRAFMIC FT DETRICK MD//MA-1A//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000010

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, EAP/EP, INR, OES/STC, OES/IHA, MED
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE AND GH
STATE PASS TO HHS/OGHA (WSTIEGER, EELVANDER AND ABHAT)
USDA PASS TO APHIS
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISA/AP (LSTERN)
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC, USAID (JMACARTHUR AND MBRADY)
ROME FOR FAO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [AMED](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [EAGR](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA: POULTRY OUTBREAKS CONTINUE, SUSPECTED HUMAN
CASES TEST NEGATIVE

REF: 06 HCMC 1497 B) 06 HANOI 2803 AND PREVIOUS

HO CHI MIN 00000010 001.2 OF 002

11. (SBU) Summary: Over the past 3 weeks, highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza (AI) has been detected in poultry in 12 districts in four of the southern most provinces of Vietnam's Mekong Delta. Over 9,000 birds have died from AI and over 24,000 have been culled since the disease first reappeared on December 11, 2006. Animal Health authorities continue to warn of further outbreaks, particularly in provinces where there is illegal breeding and smuggling of poultry. The Prime Minister instructed the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) to provide additional resources to Mekong Delta provinces to combat this recent surge in poultry outbreaks. Within these areas, thirty-four people, including four experiencing flu-like symptoms, have tested negative for AI. End Summary.

12. (U) In various national news media, MARD's Department of Animal Health reported that AI had been detected in poultry in 27 communes in 11 districts in the southern provinces of Ca Mau, Bac Lieu and Hau Giang. Animal health authorities in Hau Giang province, which neighbors Bac Lieu to the north, first confirmed AI in poultry in Xa Phien and Minh Dieu Communes on December 29. Nguyen Hien Trung, head of the Hau Giang Department of Animal Health, confirmed to local media that a dead bird had tested positive for AI in a third location, the province's Vi Thuy District. Four

hundred fifty illegally hatched, unvaccinated ducklings have died in Hau Giang to date. Animal Health authorities in Ca Mau reported to local media that no poultry deaths were reported on January 2, ending twenty consecutive days of losses. Poultry deaths are thought to have begun in early December.

¶3. (SBU) Authorities are worried about high risk of outbreaks in provinces where positive samples were found during post-vaccination surveillance. Vietnam Economic Times reported on January 3 that Animal health authorities in Quang Nam province in Central Vietnam had detected AI in twenty-two ducks tested in November and December 2006. MARD Deputy Minister Bui Ba Bong added that unless strict measures were taken, Quang Nam and possibly Danang would likely be the site of the country's next outbreak. Authorities consider that there is a high risk in the north from continued illegal trade with China. MARD Director of Animal Health Dr. Bui Quang Anh, speaking during a meeting of the National Steering Committee for Bird Flu Control in Hanoi on January 2, warned that the disease is likely to occur in other provinces across the country, particularly in northern Vietnamese provinces with high incidence of cross border poultry smuggling. The Deputy Minister warned that the northern Vietnamese provinces of Bac Giang, Hai Phong, and Thai Binh and the central Vietnamese provinces of Quang Nam and Quang Tri were most at risk for AI outbreaks in poultry.

¶4. (U) Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung instructed the seven provinces south of the Hau Giang River to take strong measures to halt the spread of AI in poultry. Speaking in Hanoi on December 31, the Prime Minister ordered authorities in all Mekong Delta provinces to isolate and destroy infected poultry quickly; increase surveillance of breeding farms; and raise public awareness to the dangers of the disease. The Prime Minister was particularly

HO CHI MIN 00000010 002.2 OF 002

critical of provincial leaders for not ensuring complete poultry vaccinations in their provinces and indicated leaders would be held accountable. Nguyen Tan Dung also pledged additional resources to combat AI in the seven provinces, instructing MARD to send additional vaccine dosages, disinfectant, and protective equipment.

¶5. (SBU) Dr. Phan Van Tu, Deputy Chief of Microbiology and Immunology at HCMC's Pasteur Institute, confirmed to Consulate General that four individuals suspected of being infected with AI have tested negative for the disease. A mother and her three children were admitted to a hospital after reporting respiratory problems days after eating a chicken that had died on their farm in Ca Mau province. The Pasteur Institute confirmed that all tested negative for H5N1 by throat swabs negative to influenza A/H5 and by diagnostic tests using real-time RTPCR. We do not yet know if patients were tested for influenza A/H1, A/H3 or type B. The patients had mild illness and all are recovering. The four patients had initials serum drawn and convalescent titers are planned. Pasteur Institute teams sent to Ca Mau and Bac Lieu had previously tested twenty nine individuals who were in close contact with diseased poultry. All cases tested negative. Dr. Tu also confirmed to EconOff that a Cambodian man recently deceased in southern Vietnam's Kien Giang province had posthumously tested negative for the presence of H5N1 in blood.

¶6. (SBU) According to Hanoi-based WHO officials, MOH reported that human testing was done at the HCMC Pasteur Institute by RT-RTPCR but had not been confirmed by an international reference laboratory. WHO encouraged MOH to send samples to one of the WHO Collaborating Centers for Surveillance, Epidemiology and Control of Influenza and proposed a joint MOH/WHO/FAO investigation. HHS/CDC Hanoi has offered laboratory and field assistance to WHO.

¶7. (SBU) Health Attache was told by WHO that FAO staff in Hanoi had received reliable reports of AI outbreaks in poultry in Can Tho, allegedly a fourth outbreak province. The GVN has yet to confirm outbreaks in Can Tho and FAO requested that USG officials not publicly comment on the situation there until the GVN can confirm and make a public announcement.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: Based on press and contact information, outbreaks in the Mekong Delta appear to be spreading due, in part, to improper carcass disposal and the trade in illegally hatched and unvaccinated poultry. The GVN recognizes the severity of the problem and is allocating additional resources to combat the outbreak in all at-risk Mekong Delta provinces. End Comment.

WINNICK